

**I am a rancher from Livermore, CA and President of the California Cattlemen's Assoc. We are here today to advocate conserving the Chimeneas Ranch through a conservation easement and strongly oppose fee title ownership by California Department Fish & Game.**

**Public ownership of this ranch is directly contrary to the extreme fiscal crisis in California. An easement would save approximately \$4 million in acquisition costs and save DF&G annual maintenance, operation and administration costs.**

**The Cattlemen's Assoc has been told repeatedly by DF&G that it does not have the budget to manage the 1 million plus acres it already owns and that it will not have such funds in the foreseeable future. So, with additional severe cuts looming, why should the Department request additional funds to buy even more land that by its own admission it cannot afford to manage.**

**The Cattlemen's Association requests that DF&G provide us today their annualized budgeted costs for this ranch, then explain what is the source of these funds. Surely this information is readily available given the proposed \$8.1 million dollar expenditure of public funds on a fee purchase of land.**

**I would also point out that this ranch has the resources DF&G so covets because it has been a working cattle ranch for over 150 years. No**

science exists that shows California tax payers spending millions of extra dollars removing numerous cattle ranches from private ownership and management has any net, positive benefit to their resources. As a matter of fact I can show several examples where the resources are in a state of decline on such properties.

Furthermore, DF&G ownership eliminates all property tax revenue to San Luis Obispo County and the State of California that private ownership provides. Do not forget that about 80% of the county's property taxes go the State. Counties are laying off sheriff deputies and health care workers as we speak so how does DF&G justify taking more dollars away from counties? A conservation easement would save millions in acquisition costs, eliminate costly tax payer supported annual operational, maintenance and administrative costs while keeping the ranch on the tax rolls and above all else protecting the resources.

Our proposal would be based on examples such as The Nature Conservancy's Howard Ranch, or California Rangeland Trust's and American Land Conservancy's Bear Valley Ranch in Colusa county. These are good examples of conserving valuable resources while being most cost effective. That is why the California Cattlemen's recommend that a

**conservation easement be placed on the Chimeneas Ranch and the property be kept in private ownership.**

**Our new Governor has requested that any Californian with a suggestion that saves the state money and results in a more efficient government should come forward. The Cattlemen's Association has come forward.**